1476. bb. 23.

EDGAR and ELFRIDA;

OR THE

POWER OF BEAUTY.

BY W. HUTTON, F. A. S. S.

Begin me, and you'll quickly spy
In tempting Love the heighth of joy;
If to the farther end you go,
You'll find in Love the depth of woe.

Birmingham:
PRINTED BY M. SWINNEY;
AND G. & J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER ROW,
London;
AND J. FRIDDEN, FLEET-STREET.

MDCCXCIV.

PREFACE.

THERE is a singular propensity in man to speak of himself. If you are obliged to keep up your leg for a broken shin, every one indulges you with a history of his broken shin, which is sometimes not very concise. If attacked by the ague, every friend becomes a physician, and prescribes for the ague. We had much rather tell our own tale, than hear another's. He who speaks of himself, walks upon ice, therefore, he should walk with circumspection, and make his journey short.

Inclined to verse, I wrote a volume of Poems in early life, which slept peaceably upon my shelf without any addition, during forty years.

Having a warm affection for Birmingham, where I had many friends, I wished to serve it in a public capacity to the best of my powers. Among other pursuits, I spent much time, and more attention, in conducting the Court of Requests, *which, for nineteen years, chiefly devolved upon myself. But from the 14th of July, 1791, when the Rioters chose to amuse themselves with the destruction of Ten Thousand Pounds worth of my Property, I declined public business. Thus* I paid, *instead of* being paid *for my labors.*

As I had never with design, or neglect, offended any man, the surprise, the loss, the anxiety, the insults, the trouble, nearly brought me to the grave.

Time, *that able assistant in distress, lent his aid, and again expanded a capacious field for thought.*

Lost to public life; my volume of poems being destroyed; and, as an active mind condemned to silence, becomes a burden to itself, I took up the poetical *pen, and in nine months composed two slender volumes. The following, which is a small part, is a most interesting anecdote in our own history, which, I believe, has been displayed by* Mr. Mason, *though I have never seen the work.*

W. H.

[illegible]

EDGAR and ELFRIDA.

Our prior part will just afford
A Saxon Beauty, and a Lord.

THE Tales, dear reader, I give you,
Accept as bona fida, true,
If you to truth think they want fitness,
I'll bring old *Hollingshed* to witness;
And should you then solicit more,
I'll quickly summon half a score.

The minds of men are just the same
As when our father *Adam* came;
Just so the passions rise, and rest,
Spring, and lie dormant in the breast.
Among the herd which rise and fall,
Love everlastingly rules all;
The winds and snows, their powers may muster,
But the sun conquers all their bluster.

Allow me then a time to fix,
That is, nine hundred sixty six;
Ordang, the Earl of Devonshire,
Kept many a *Hind*, and many a *Squire*,
He liv'd in friendship with his neighbours,
And call'd in, when he pleas'd, their labors,
For which he paid in beef and corn,
And gave his liquor in a horn.
At dinner time there smok'd a capon,
At breakfast frizzled eggs and bacon;
Lean beef, a standing dish prevail,
The evening feast was toast and ale;
Sugar and tea did not appear
Within this Northern hemisphere.
With liquors strong we're now abus'd,
Then were medicinally us'd;
Physicians too, the country round,
Did very sparingly abound,
And those that were did little hurt,
They'd scarce a belly or a shirt;
No cane to smell at, smooth or rough,
Nor sentence ek'd with pinch of snuff.

The priesthood then most high appear'd,
Were, of all classes, most rever'd;
In abbey houses met in hords,
And liv'd just like a House of Lords.
The parson kept a table then,
But now depends on other men.—
Silver were seldom seen, or *Guinea*,
Never the smoke of *Best Virginia*,
The lux'ries of the East unknown,
Nay, e'en the East itself unshewn.
Sir Earl ne'er look'd for foreign dainty,
His simple maxim, *Plain and Plenty;*
The highest style which met regard,
Was bounded by the farmer's yard.

This noble Earl possess'd great store,
One daughter had, but had no more,
The greatest beauty of the age,
And beauty'll ev'ry eye engage.
Her figure slender, straight, and tall,
She shar'd what to the Graces fall;

Her face, her air, from head to feet,
Were what the critics call compleat.
Though Nature fairly did her part,
Yet something must be done by art:
Her figure tall, she strives to mend
With hood and heels at either end;
Nor, by her mother was it said,
"*Elfrida*, don't hold down your head."
Her flowing robe, which swept the ground,
Was closely with a girdle bound,
Conformable to ruling taste,
It warm'd, and made a slender waist;
And Beauty's pointed still the higher,
When all the charms of dress conspire.
Her face, which each beholder won,
Avoided nothing but the sun.

When by old age the fair was seen,
He stood transported with her mein
A superannuated lover!
His eyes he never could recover.

How could those eyes be call'd his own,
When *she* commanded them alone,
But sure as ever he's alive,
She'd bring him back to twenty five.
Lost in astonishment, the sage
Forgot the long decays of age,
What danger then for *youth* t'admire!
For they, like tinder, catch the fire.
If sick, or in a lame condition,
Her smiles would prove the best physician,
Or fell distress the mind enthral,
One sight, and they're forgotten all.
In visiting an aunt, or cousin,
She gather'd hearts up by the dozen;
For *riches* she must be admir'd,
Who would not give what she desir'd!
For her alone the lover lives,
He gives all when—*himself* he gives.
A power supreme, 'twas thought no task
Quick to perform whate'er she'd ask;
Can any state be higher made
Than have our instant will obey'd?

It much facilitates our ease,
When every act that's done shall please;
She spent her time without demur,
Not courting fame, fame courted her.

THE SECOND PART.

Behold a Monarch struck; in fact,
A Courtier acts as Courtiers act.

THEN *Edgar* rul'd o'er England's fee,
A handsome man of twenty three,
Surnam'd the *peaceable*, we hear,
Because he never went to war,
None durst against him forces send,
B'ing *always* ready to defend;
Leaving this rule on history's page
To ministers of every age,
The nation who in peace would share,
Should always be prepar'd for war.

The amorous cast of *Edgar*'s mind,
Shew'd he was much to love inclin'd;
From reasoning he concluded then,
That women were ordain'd for men,
And, as he held the leading voice,
Of beauties ought to have his choice;
Others may take what he refuses,
As *King*, he'll have whate'er he chuses.
A sovereign, then, of powerful sway,
What lady *will*, or *can* say nay?

Elfrida's fame spread far and near,
And quickly reach'd the royal ear.
"That must be true, by all confess'd,
"Which is by every tongue express'd."
King *Edgar*, from *Elfrida*'s fame,
Lov'd, sought, and must possess the dame.

Earl *Ethelwold*, his minister,
In all his master's secrets were,
On every point, of love, or state,
Together privately debate.

The *Sovereign* laid aside, they meet
In conversation, *tete a tete*.
Now *one* in argument's a gainer,
And now the other states it plainer;
If now, in pacing reason's round,
They leave the matter as 'twas found,
At other times they hit the joint,
And steer exactly to one point,
No variance could you ever view,
But in opinion, 'twixt the two.

" Earl, says the King, with some surprise,
" Lord *Ordang*'s daughter seems to rise
" The first in beauty, and in fame,
" Woods echo with *Elfrida*'s name;
" That lady'll soon become a bride,
" Who wins the palm from all beside.
" Think you the *whole* is true, that's said,
" Or does *praise* beautify the maid?
" Those charms which *every* heart engages,
" Are seen but once in twenty ages;

" Like comets, which strange laws are under,
" We seldom see, but see with wonder;
" Beauty, the weifs of royalty,
" As lord par'mount, belongs to me;
" If I were sure she's what is said,
" I'd place a crown upon her head,
" But whether I in wedlock join,
" Or not, the lady must be mine.
" You, *Ethelwold*, shall go and see,
" And bring a just account to me."

" That she's as fair, I make no doubt,
" As is believed the world throughout,
" Said *Ethelwold*, with smiling ease,
" For courtiers ever wish to please;
" I'll for the embassy prepare,
" Though stranger to Lord Devonshire.
" A peer, however, people say,
" To brother peers can find a way;
" Besides, the fav'rite of a throne
" Is the best passport ever known."

THE THIRD PART.

If you a Minister shall meet,
You'll find deceit upon deceit;
To serve the King *was his intention,*
But he was dipt beyond redemption.

NOW *Ethelwold*, with men and arms,
With silver badg'd, without alarms;
Half boots, large spurs, with harness clever,
Is travelling the Lord knows whither,
Through road that's narrow, road that's bent,
Till he arriv'd by *accident*
At a large castle, very near,
'Twas *Ordang's*, Earl of Devonshire.
Needful enquiries made, and more,
With others full well known before;
The ring was rattl'd, porters flee
To tell their lord, "There's Company."

" *Ethelwold* is, Sir Earl, my name,
" My way I lost, and hither came."

" Alight, my lord, for you'll find here
" That welcome, which is most sincere ;
" 'Tis drawing t'wards the close of day,
" And difficult to find the way ;
" If you go farther, worse may fare,
" Consent, my Lord, to tarry here."

The stranger pleas'd that he was press'd,
And *Ordang* to have such a guest.

The introduction follow'd a'ter,
" This is my lady, this my daughter."
Some bows and courtsies then did pass on,
For bows and courtsies were the fashion :
But what was *Ethelwold*'s surprize,
When on *Elfrida* fix'd his eyes !
He saw at once that grace and ease,
Denoting ev'ry power to please ;

The beauties he beheld were more
Than poets sung, or lovers swore:
Can he to *Edgar* then make known,
Those treasures which he wish'd his own?
Charm'd with the bright *Elfrida*'s voice,
Forgot his errand in a trice.
Fill'd with the raptures she had brought,
Edgar himself was soon forgot;
As beauty his whole heart possess'd,
Forgot himself among the rest:
How much soe'er for love unfit,
He's conquered, therefore must submit.

Thus love, which rules us soon or late,
Visits a minister of state;
And in that bosom holds command,
Which, under *Edgar*, rules the land.

The softest glances, heaving sighs,
The rhet'ric of a lover's eyes,
Issu'd from *Ethelwold*, to please,
By lovers understood with ease;

A language which can well impart
The real dictates of the heart;
The only language which we own
Is nature's; and 'tis her's alone;
And none before or since the flood,
Were ever better understood:
'Twas never us'd, to prove we're able,
By scolding folks who work'd at Babel.

His tell-tale eyes, which could not rest,
Told her what pass'd within his breast,
And told her true, we much believe,
A courtier! yet could not deceive;
And all the muse can truly tell,
Elfrida's eyes did not repel;
By playing well the lover's part,
He won at length just half her heart;
But *Ethelwold* had this to moan,
By playing ill he lost his own.

From glancing, squeezing, dearing, life,
He sued the fair one for a wife;

Though older by a dozen years,
Still in the bloom of youth appears:
For how can man look old, or die
Under the influence of her eye!

Int'rest in marr'age parents move,
But children guided are by *love*;
Just half her heart, we said, not more,
She parted with ten lines before:
The other half, exempt from care,
Like cuckow sings, and sports in air,
Or nimble, like a scale, will rise
With a light guinea, which it tries;
Till earl and countess of renown
Threw in their weight, and brought it down.
What parent ever can withstand
The second person in the land?
What daughter can be reckon'd poor,
When daub'd with coronets all o'er!
Or, did a woman ever groan
Under the greatest title known?

And now the silken knot is tyed,
Elfrida is become a bride ;
The happiest moments of our life
Are, when we first are man and wife :
If there's one bliss left straggling loose,
'Tis that we'd sooner ty'd the noose.

As *Ethelwold* might meet disaster
If he ſhould disoblige his master,
Accomplishing ſo bold a thing,
And not apprize his *friend* and *king* ;
A ſecret wedding was thought best,
Till he the monarch had address'd.

Now feasting, drinking, toying, loving,
With every am'rous passion moving ;
To that great bliss are lovers brought,
For-ever is a term too ſhort !

But now behind one little measure
Of evil lay, which damp'd his pleasure :
" How he could quit his dearest dear,
" And how to *Edgar* he'll appear.

'Tis happy, when we meet disaster,
To find it brings with it a plaister,
And he's the wisest man, we own,
Who best knows how to lay it on.
" If he must quit the dear embrace,
" 'Twill be but for a little space,
" And though depriv'd of bliss so sweet,
" The pleasure doubles when we meet;
" To fast a while may do us good,
" 'Tis hunger makes us relish food,
" And as to managing the king,
" To dupe one is the easiest thing—
" He sways like master in a school,
" But *ministers* the sovereign rule."

Bright *Luna* with her silver horn
A lovely morning did adorn,
But Sol got up in haste, it seems,
And dazzl'd her with brighter beams.
To leave the fair our bridegroom's loth,
Whose brightness far outstrip'd them both;

Luna, and every soul beside
Are vastly fond to see a bride,
For this she watch'd the live-long night,
In expectation of the sight ;
And Sol was early when he started
To have a sight before they parted.

And now they give a parting look,
While he a thoughtful journey took,
When many a dismal road he'd past,
Arriv'd at *Edgar*'s court at last.

" Well, *Ethelwold*, began the King,
" What are the tidings which you bring ?
" Is beauty of that high renown
" To mount a throne, and wear a crown?"

" The roads were dirty, blind, and rough,
" Which made my journey long enough,
" Civility my time delay'd,
" These were the reasons why I stay'd.

" I found, I own, some beauty there,
" But not so much as I find here ;
" False fame has done more for the creature
" Than ever yet was done by Nature.
" She knows the toss, the flount, the flirt,
" But has not power the heart to hurt,
" The greatest beauty I saw there, is
" In her large fortune—she's an heiress.
" No danger from her eyes can flow,
" A man may *come* as free as *go*,
" That grace which sets the heart a panting,
" I own, in her, is rather wanting ;
" Her hand can act, her tongue can tell,
" And yet she uses neither well ;
" I found while there upon your duty,
" More hospitality than beauty."

" You, says the King, I knew could tell,
" For merit you can fathom well,
" More charms, by fame are brought to view
" In a *new* beauty, than's her due ;

" The mind for *fresh* prepares with ease,
" 'Tis *novelty* alone can please."

Thus lucky *Ethelwold*, 'tis true,
This fiery ordeal had gone through,
And though he joyous would appear,
His heart was far from void of fear;
For he who 'gainst a friend can sin
Will feel a dreadful pang within.
A courtier strictly in his duty,
He'd dup'd a king, and dup'd a beauty;
But why should he himself deride,
All parties then were satisfied,
Dame Fortune smil'd, and seem'd to tell
He'd done his errand pretty well;
None of his conduct seem'd absurd,
And now we finish part the third.

THE FOURTH PART.

He who is master of a case,
Can shew it with a double face.

THE life of man is full of cares,
Buoy'd up with hope, beat down with fears,
If *one* a mighty state commands,
He's work enough upon his hands;
But if he is a lover too,
Why then he's *twice* the work to do.
Earl *Ethelwold*'s severely goaded,
For now we find him double loaded;
But love's not always heavy stated,
It *is*, or is not, as 'tis fated:
But the Earl's love-load here we view
By much the heaviest of the two,

For though he'd pass'd the monarch's sight,
Yet every thing might not be right;
He could not tell, 'tis free confess'd,
The state of love in *Edgar*'s breast,
And till the King the chair should quit,
There were no room for him to sit;
Anxiety the lover mov'd
Just in proportion as he lov'd.

No eyes are quicker to discover,
Than those of *minister* or *lover*,
In both capacities we hold
The eyes of our Count *Ethelwold;*
He watch'd the sovereign's breast, to find
If any lurkings were behind,
And yet he durst not mention straight
A case so very delicate;
Though on the whole he seem'd to flout it,
He talk'd about it, and about it:
Thus hungry birds by wings are borne
To feed upon your heap of corn,

But dare not venture with their feet
Upon the body of the heap,
Peck the loose grains, as safety urge,
And nibble round about the verge.

When a few weeks were pass'd, or more,
And the dark clouds were blowing o'er,
As madam had not been express'd,
She seem'd expung'd the royal breast,
And, if the monarch's suit was gone,
'Twas needful to prefer his own ;
But how to do it was the task,
For when a favour we would ask
Of a superior, we're mute,
It takes a brazen face to do't ;
Instead of setting words afloat,
We find them struggling in the throat,
And, cruel, put us to the rout,
We can, by no means, pump them out.
Sounds incoherent, rising thus,
Is rather apt to raise a blush ;

The more the favour, in our view,
The harder is the task to sue.
Ethelwold kept resolving on
Till time came up, till time was gone,
By losing this from day to day
Resolves were strengthen'd by delay.
Determin'd he would state his case,
Nor suffer by a bashful face,
A courtier, if he thinks a while on't,
Knows when to speak, and when be silent.

"My Liege," cry'd *Ethelwold*, and faulter'd,
His face and voice a little alter'd,
For what man's tongue can wag on glib,
When he's delivering out a fib?
" My Liege, I've sometimes *thou-thou*-thought to state
" A matter, which *oc*-occur'd of late
" 'Bout *Ordang*, and his *dau-dau*-daughter too,
" A visit—which I made—for you—
" The girl is passible, I own'd,
" But can't be for a beauty crown'd,

" To have some charms she may be said,
" But not to grace a royal bed;
" She's other charms, which I can see,
" That would exactly suit with me,
" What you prize most she has not got,
" But what I prize she has a stock,
" The fortune's large which she can bring,
" But this is nothing to a king:
" 'Tis *Beauty* dress'd in all its charms
" That's a fit subject for your arms,
" But if bold *error* makes a choice,
" 'Tis ridicul'd by public voice;
" Your grace seems to have given over
" The thoughts of ever b'ing her lover,
" Then as she's free for every man,
" A prize for him to win who can,
" Let me to you *one* suit prefer,
" That I another may to her,
" Her *fortune* would make her my bride
" Sooner than all she boasts beside;
" 'Tis, sure, the greatest bliss alive
" To see your faithful servants thrive."

King *Edgar*, having heard awhile,
Consent he nodded with a smile.

THE FIFTH PART.

Can man continue *to possess*
The highest pitch of happiness?

TELL me, dear reader, if you can,
Than *Ethelwold* a happier man?
Or whether fate could, to his store,
Even one blessing squeeze in more.
Of good, or bad, of sorrow, pleasure,
The heart will hold a certain measure,
And, like another vessel shews
When fill'd too full, it overflows.
He'd youth, and health, and riches too,
A stock commanded but by few;
Still more he had, we eas'ly find,
For he possess'd a happy mind,

The sovereign's smiles upon him shone,
The greatest beauty was his own,
He sat up late, he rose up soon,
Was blythe just like the sun in June,
So high a bliss in every case
Will raise up enemies apace.

Now *Ethelwold* is passing o'er
The ground he travell'd once before,
But in a diff'rent stile, tis true,
As well as with a diff'rent view;
For now his equipage was bright,
His *heart* as any lover's light,
His future happiness he summ'd,
And as he went this ditty humm'd:

Behold my bliss is made compleat,
I've all the world can give;
For next my sovereign's is my seat,
My orders he'll receive.

Pale envy hides her sickly face,
I rise above my foes;
By cunning I avoid disgrace,
None can my plan oppose.

Some future poet shall record
The state in which I shine;
But what's worth all, in one dear word,
The bright *Elfrida*'s mine.

A traveller his pace will mend
When there's a welcome at the end,
But he'll with expedition ride
When he's to clasp a blooming bride;
His feelings were not quite the same
While thus approaching near the dame,
As when to *Edgar* he applied,
To ask the lady for his bride.

My eye shall not attempt to peep in
The raptures of the present meeting,
Only observe what plain appears,
His joy was rather more than her's.

Now they, in all the pomp of state,
A public wedding celebrate,
Which proves most clearly at one view,
His song was every tittle true,

If through *two* weddings we have gone,
Why then 'tis preferable to one:
The first occurr'd from their own choice,
The last to feed the public voice;
Besides, your shoe is faster on
When tied with two knots, than with one.

How much they drank, and danc'd, and sung,
How merrily the bells had rung,
And how the village eat an ox,
And tippl'd till they tried to box,
It may be prudent to with-hold,
In this fifth part shall not be told.
The willing muse will only say,
Earl *Ethelwold* spent many a day
In bliss, if we believe report,
When bus'ness call'd him back to court.

THE SIXTH PART.

'Tis matter that excites our thinking
When we from happiness are sinking;
For if the world begins to frown,
It indicates a tumble down.

HOW few there are, in this frail state,
Their joys and woes can estimate?
When you examine friend, or brother,
" Their trouble's greater than another."
The reason we can eas'ly find,
It stands the foremost in the mind,
If lucky hit should him pursue,
" It never could have fall'n to you."
A mighty evil seems to flow,
Which sinks the lofty spirit low,

But ends, although it gives a wound,
Just like a drum, in empty sound.
Some *joys* are pretty near the same,
What we think solid, is—a name.
Want and disease attack apace,
And daily stare us in the face;
While *thoughts* of want, disease, the grave,
Destroy the very things we have;
Thus, by false judgment, we're enthrall'd,
Our pains and pleasures are forestall'd.

Earl *Ethelwold* might rate his joy,
I'm apt too think, a peg too high,
The flood was up, the stream was strong,
Which swept his judgment quite along.

I think we said, some lines ago,
"That elevation makes a foe."
When a man rises to renown,
What pleasure 'tis to pull him down!
A courtier, like a Shrove-tide cock,
Stands to receive full many a knock;

Tied to a throne, without regard
He can't recede above a yard,
Although his recent conduct be
As any cock's from error free;
For him disgrace is laid in store,
Though faithful as Sir Thomas Moore.

A lady is, when married found,
Dissected by the country round,
Her faults and beauties brought to shew,
And set, like soldiers, all a-row;
This was *Elfrida*'s case, 'twas clever,
Her beauties made more shew than ever,
And, travelling both far and near,
Again they reach'd the royal ear.
" He wonder'd, *Ethelwold*'s shrewd choice
" Should contradict the public voice;
" But why should he believe the throng,
" He never found his judgment wrong,
" Was always faithful in his place,
" And yet this seems a doubtful case."

While *Edgar*'s courtiers, one and all,
Could vastly like to see him fall,
But to accuse, before a King,
A minister,'s a dangerous thing;
For when impeachment they're pursuing,
To one side it must prove the ruin,
Yet, when the resolution's took,
We'll have it done by hook or crook.

'Twas whisper'd now to *Edgar* slily,
That *Ethelwold* was rather wily,
" That when he took his journey hence
" To serve the *King*, 'twas all pretence;
" Instead of *carving* as he ought,
" On *Edgar* he had never thought,
" But for himself, when on the spot,
" The most delicious morsel got."

King *Edgar* smil'd, as at a jest,
But still it wrankl'd in his breast.

THE SEVENTH PART.

Two men, who liv'd like friend and brother,
Impose compleatly on each other,
What cause such strange effects can move?
The cause was thine, almighty Love!
In every age your powers are seen,
You made the Widow Gray *a queen,*
Did vengeance on her husband bring,
And to a beggar turn'd a King;
Into confusion Troy *you hurl'd,*
And lost Mark Anthony *the world!*

THOUGH happy hours may wait on all,
The scene may change, the curtain fall;
My sportive pen has, for a while,
Treated the reader with a smile,
But now I'm bound to bring in use
The handkerchief, and tragic muse.
Ethelwold's ditty, 'tis confess'd,
Will scarcely bear the strictest test.

The sovereign felt a tortur'd heart,
And found his evening rest depart,
" He'd never to a subject stoop,
" 'Thad all th' appearance of a dupe;
" A deep laid scheme is seldom right,
" He'd drag the action to the light,
" For though the Earl had won the prize,
" He'd treat him with his own disguise;
" Though watch'd, as does a courtier watch,
" His real thoughts should never catch."

" Earl, says the King, with joyous look,
" A part in your success I took,
" Which, now compleat, I'm over joy'd
" That you've obtain'd so fair a bride,
" That happiness, I hope you'll gain,
" Which many seek, but few obtain."

ETHELWOLD.

A sovereign who deserves like you,
We gladly serve, and serve him true;
Interest! the least of our regard,
The *service* is a full reward.

KING.

I much applaud your prudent choice,
You deviate from the public voice,
The stile of *beauty* they pursue,
But weightier reasons govern you:
He who intends to take a spouse,
Acts like a man who builds a house;
First beauty, every one must own,
Rests as the chief foundation stone,
The next materials laid above,
Is that important passion, *love*,
Of workmanship he gives a proof,
And wedlock finishes the roof.
If the foundations then give way,
How can the building stand a day?
Beauty, sometimes, won't last a year,
And then to *devil* turns the *dear*;
But if you'd lead a happy life,
Let interest sway you in a wife,
And if you then pursue your own,
You follow her's, for both are one.
You, *Ethelwold*, have studied your's,
And, to your fortune, added her's.

ETHELWOLD.

I have not powers t'express by word,
How much I love my sovereign lord:
Whatever course I shall pursue,
My talents I'll employ for you;
I'd rather actions did express
The medium of my faithfulness,
But faithful actions, it is true,
Can't tell how much I value you.

KING.

It is but right, the monarch cry'd,
That I should compliment the bride,
Her station calls me to that end,
Besides, she's married to a *friend*.

ETHELWOLD.

We should be happy, I confess,
To have a visit from your grace,
But the highway's so bad, alas,
You cannot without danger pass;

'Tis blind, dark, rough, and miry too,
The traveller is sure to rue,
And we should be in dreadful case
If evil should betide your grace.

KING.

Fame says, *Elfrida*'s charms surpass
The charms of every other lass,
While some, the question to perplex,
Say, she's outdone by half her sex;
Whenever I the lady view
I'll give a judgment that is true.

These words made *Ethelwold* turn pale,
He found his heart within him fail;
But while beneath the royal eye,
To hide them both, made this reply:—

Rather than venture far from home,
Elfrida up to court shall come,
For dreary woods lie on the road
Through which you pass to our abode;

These full of desperados are,
Who rob, and slay the traveller;
I shunn'd them, for I made quick haste,
As ought a servant of your grace,
For *you* they'd look with sharper eyes,
Because a king's the better prize.

KING.

Lord *Ordang*, I observe to you,
Deserves my best affections too,
This friendly visit can't be late,
Nor will admit of more debate.

As *Ethelwold* had, to his cost,
Pursu'd his argument, and lost
His fetch, of bringing up his bride,
That time might pass, was thrown aside;
From every strong hold driven out,
Now got into his last redoubt.

He begg'd the king would grant this boon,
As he resolv'd a visit soon,

That he before might travel home
To tell his wife, the king would come,
Or else *Elfrida'd* think it hard,
The King might find her unprepar'd;
If unprepar'd in any case,
Would be an insult on his grace.

Consent was had; the Earl, they say,
In sorrow march'd to lead the way.

THE EIGHTH PART.

He feels himself in woeful plight,
Whose only treasure's brought to light;
And yet he'll feel much more dismay,
To find that treasure ta'en away.

I'D celebrate the Saxon times,
If I could bring them into rhymes,
But there's a savageness, I see,
Which neither suits my pen, or me;
But modern times are much completer,
They suit exactly with my metre,
Our laws wou'd make a sovereign fau'ter,
For scaling castle, wife, or daughter;
The world keeps mending as it goes,
A sovereign better manners knows.

We left, concluding our last part,
Poor *Ethelwold* with heavy heart,
He reach'd his home, he found his dear,
His countenance bespoke his fear,
Approach'd the fair with half a smile,
His inward feelings to beguile;
But that half smile she saw, of course,
Was totally the effects of force.
" Something's amiss, I see full well,
" What evil has my lord befel?"
He humbly at her feet did fall,
And though a courtier, told her all.

" Your fame had reach'd the King, he
cry'd,
" Who wish'd to have you for a bride,
" He sent me to examine you,
" To see if fame had told him true;
" At sight of such a face divine,
" I must confess, I wish'd you mine:
" I tri'd to win your heart alone,
" I tri'd, alas, but lost my own;

" Knowing no chance there were for me
" If ever you the King should see,
" Told him, at my return, I found
" Your beauty less (and here she frown'd)
" Than't really was. But where's the fault,
" Who can express it as he ought?
" For though the highest words are his,
" He'll still fall short of what it is;
" From the result I gave him then,
" Resign'd the thought (She frown'd again):
" And when I guess'd the King had done,
" I ask'd to have you for my own.
" This he allow'd; and I began
" To think myself the happiest man,
" Till fame again, by what appears,
" Sounded your beauty in his ears;
" And now he comes to visit you,
" To see if fame, or I, tell true.

" This is the whole, I now confess,
" Pity a husband in distress,

" Whose love's sincere, whose heart is true;
" I fall, if not upheld by you.
" The way to save me is your part,
" Then blunt those charms which strike the heart;
" For if King *Edgar* wounded be,
" That wound will surely fall on me;
" Then let your dress, my dearest life,
" Be nothing like a Baron's wife,
" But course and dirty, ragged too,
" Your face and hands of grimmish hue;
" Your manners blunt, and void of arts,
" To correspond with other parts."

She heard him through without rebuke,
Then gave him back a sullen look,
While *Ethelwold* rose from her feet,
Returning back the King to meet.

In *man*, what's harder of digestion,
Than when his brains are call'd in question?

And, take it for a standing rule,
He'll not digest being call'd a fool.
But the great sin against a woman
Is, when you make her beauty common:
She never is offended much
If th' *inside* of her head you touch,
Provided you, clear of all doubt,
Sufficient praise the charms without;
Her beauty you may praise t'excess,
But don't attempt to make it less.

If smiling beauty makes us rue,
What can *offended* beauty do?
Why, all her thoughts are for *receiving*,
She's no ideas of *forgiving*.
Poor *Ethelwold*, in this dread time,
Was punish'd far beyond his crime;
If he depriv'd her of a throne,
He made himself, and his, her own.

While silent expectations reign,
King *Edgar* enters, with his train,

Escorted on his visit there
By *Ethelwold*, the Earl, and—Fear.
But what were every one's surprise,
To see a matchless beauty rise!
Instead of rags, and filth, to harm,
She'd richly pointed every charm,
Not the least sulky look was seen,
The little "loves play'd in her een."
Varnish and paint she never knew,
Nature, more lovely, met the view,
And most superbly was she dress'd,
Which gave a lustre to the rest;
None had been equal to her yet,
For here, we find, the graces met.
Such charms, if scatter'd up and down,
Were quite enough to fill a town.

Astonishment seiz'd all, we find,
Except the Earl, who stood behind
With grinding features, wringing hands,
Which shew'd that horror gave commands,
Nor can it ever be express'd
The tortures which she gave his breast.

Wonders to every eye were dealt;
But *Edgar* saw, and, seeing, felt;
He found all true fame said before,
And, what was left unsaid, much more;
Each act, look, word, she did impart,
Made new impressions on his heart,
His love, a serious passion turn'd,
It us'd to warm, but now it burn'd.

The more for her his passion grew,
His anger to the husband flew,
But he to shew th' effects was loth,
Therefore, in silence, cover'd both;
And flames confin'd are still the worse,
They'll quickly blaze with double force.

Thus bright *Elfrida* made her charms
The source of pleasure, and of harms,
Mistress of all which art can bring,
She play'd a game, and won a king.

THE NINTH PART.

From joyous scenes the eye shall move,
And here behold the end of Love.

IF we survey *Elfrida*'s mind,
To conquest she was much inclin'd,
Ever attempting to pursue,
Ran down *old* game, and started new.
A husband won! and yet she's vain,
She'll add a monarch to her train;
The conquest made, the evil's brought on,
But not the consequences thought on.

To *Edgar* now we'll cast an eye,
The inside of his bosom try,
A bosom rufflʼd, rent, and torn,
Much like the ocean in a storm,

Which, till the raging tempests cease,
Cannot enjoy a moment's peace.
" His title's double to the fair,
" As he can plainly make appear
" A prior right in him was vested,
" Which could not legally be wrested ;
" But lost it by a servant's trick,
" The cross idea made him sick.
" A weightier reason lay beside,
" He lost a most enchanting bride!
" What title can a subject bring
" To steal the substance of a king?

We've drawn them both with due respect,
We'll turn, and *Ethelwold* dissect ;
As ruffl'd will his breast appear,
Only, there was less rage than fear.
His fate unhappy, he bewail'd,
That all his soft persuasions fail'd,
Elfrida would not, in distress,
Indulge him with a simple dress ;

He knew not, therefore only guess'd
The inward state of *Edgar*'s breast,
But dreaded his unhappy fate,
Lest he should fall beneath his hate.

Thus we've, in numbers strictly true,
Presented all the three to view;
The monarch hurt, the husband down,
The lady pleas'd she'd touch'd a crown.

Poor *Ethelwold* had miss'd his end,
For in a King he lost a friend,
And in the bosom of a bride
He was not able to confide.

Elfrida, happy to discover
In her vast suit a royal lover,
While *Edgar* dwindled like a ghost,
Depriv'd of what he valu'd most:
" Why should I languish day and night,
" When I can prosecute my right?
" Why in love's chain confin'd a slave?
" The lady's mine—and her I'll have."

He call'd for *Ethelwold* in haste,
And told him he'd no time to waste,
Must for Northumberland prepare,
To finish a transaction there.

The Earl, with a desponding look,
His melancholy journey took,
The King surpris'd him in a wood,
Which then in *Harwood Forest* stood;
Rage in his aspect took its stand,
He grasp'd a jav'lin in his hand,
" Perfidious villain, *Edgar* cry'd,
" You basely wrong'd me of a bride;"
While fire his eyes were seen to dart,
He sent the javelin through his heart.

O *Ethelwold*, now seen no more,
Thy fault we pity, fate deplore,
Thy dreadful case the heart will move,
Who can withstand the powers of Love?
Of all the passions now in use,
Love strongest pleads its own excuse;

For thee the priest shall vigils keep,
For thee the distant eye shall weep,
The poet shall thy death bewail,
To times remote convey thy tale;
Nay, e'en *Elfrida*, rais'd so high,
At thy sad fate shall heave a sigh;
Perhaps she'll give her conquests o'er,
And on the murd'rer shut the door.
No —
She pardon'd him, forgot the crime,
They married in a little time;
What were their thoughts, what pangs succeed
Resulting from so foul a deed
We find no history to express,
They left posterity to guess.
The new-made love their sin beguile,
The murder was forgot awhile;
Relenting, she taught time to tell
The spot on which her husband fell,
For there a nunnery she built
To mark the place his blood was spilt.

Such pious jobs must, without doubt,
Erase the vilest murder out;
It stifles all religious qualms,
It pays the monk for singing psalms,
Appeases heaven, and, what is best,
It rocks the fleeting ghost to rest.

FINIS.